

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 726

CS 204 203

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 TITLE Writing and Using Classroom Journals.
 PUB DATE 74
 NOTE 69p.; M.Ed. Thesis, University of North Dakota

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$3.50 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Classroom Communication; *Composition (Literary);
 *Creative Writing; *Descriptive Writing; English
 Instruction; *Expository Writing; Intermediate
 Grades; Language Development; Program Evaluation;
 Questionnaires; *Self Expression; *Teaching
 Techniques; Writing Skills
 IDENTIFIERS *Student Journals

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to initiate a classroom journal-writing program that would provide children with an opportunity to express themselves freely, and that would offer useful information for improving relationships within the classroom. Both students and teacher kept daily journals for a year. Four simple rules governed the procedure, and the program was discussed periodically in class to assess problems and to make needed adjustments. At the end of the school year a journal questionnaire was completed by each child. The program evaluations were positive in that children had an opportunity to express their interests and concerns in writing and to explore different possibilities of style and self-expression. The study includes the teacher's personal evaluation of the program, suggestions for using the information from children's journals, the evaluation questionnaire, and excerpts from both the students' and the teacher's journals. (MAI)

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WRITING AND USING CLASSROOM JOURNALS

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Swarthmore College, 1967
Bachelor of Science in Education, University of North Dakota, 1973

An Independent Study

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Education

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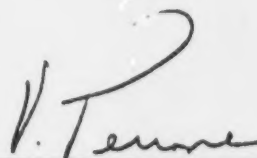
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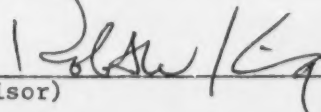
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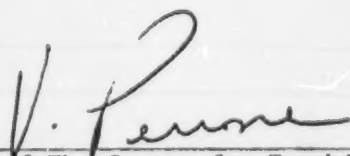
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank some of the people who helped me survive my first year of teaching, and thus helped make this paper a reality.

First I wish to thank the children in the sixth grade class at Sweetwater Elementary School, Devils Lake, North Dakota. Their unbridled honesty helped me become more honest, and more "open", with them and with myself. Through the children and their writing, I began to come to grips with the problems of growing up in a world that often seems alien and unfair. We survived the year together and, I hope, are better human beings for it.

Vito Perrone has been a constant source of inspiration for me, because of his remarkable faith in human beings and because he believes so strongly and passionately that there is a better way to educate children.

Dr. Robert King provided me with much needed intellectual and emotional support throughout the school year. He "turned me on" (sorry, Bob) to writing, for which I am completely grateful. I hope that some of the things I have learned from him, about language and learning, comes through in this paper.

Steven DeLapp, Guy Patterson, David Schjeldahl and I spent a great deal of time talking about education, sharing problems and supporting each other. With their help I was able to maintain some

degree of sanity through a very trying year. I also want to thank "Babe" Sampson and Ken Langton for their patience and support.

Finally I want to thank Cheryl and Carrie Prentice, who kept things going in my absence. Without them to come home to I doubt that I would have made it.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to initiate a classroom journal-writing program that would provide a non-threatening writing situation in which children felt free to express themselves honestly, and that would provide useful information for both students and teacher in improving the quality of human relationships in the classroom.

Procedure

The idea of keeping a daily classroom journal was introduced to the children, the rules for journal-writing were discussed, and adjustments to this procedure were made. In addition, a Journal Questionnaire was filled out by each child at the end of the year.

Results

The journal-writing program did provide the children with an opportunity to write about themselves, their interests and concerns, and to explore different possibilities of style and self-expression. The program also improved understanding, and thus communication, between the students and teacher.

PART I

WRITING CLASSROOM JOURNALS: THE STUDENT AS JOURNAL-WRITER

CHAPTER I

INITIATING THE JOURNAL PROGRAM

Introduction

And September rolled around...

As a Master's Intern and, more importantly, as a first-year teacher, I found myself confronted by, and seemingly unable to deal with, the realities of the classroom. They were overwhelming. Nothing seemed to work. After three frustrating months I began to define, vaguely at first, the problems that were bothering me and the children, and to work out some solutions.

The following problems seemed to be most pressing: (1) I did not understand the children, their language, needs, interests and concerns, and they did not understand me. Effective communication was nil.

(2) I felt the need to provide some means for sorting out the deluge of impressions, doubts, fears and other sensory data raining down on me

every day. (3) Although there was a tremendous amount of interaction in

the classroom, positive and negative, the children showed little or no interest in trying to understand or improve this interaction. (4) And

finally, the children's writing distressed me; creative writing was an exercise in figuring out what the teacher wanted to hear; the children

were not writing about things that were meaningful to them. In a

desperate attempt to deal with this fourfold problem (which I now see as a single problem, the problem of "openness" or "honesty" to be discussed later), I decided to initiate a journal-writing program.

I had never kept a journal myself nor had I ever read anything about children's journals, but I felt that a journal-writing program might be a good way to get at the problems mentioned above. Several books that I had read, most notably How to Survive in Your Native Land, by James Herndon, and Teaching as a Subversive Activity, by Postman and Weingartner, seemed to be dealing with the problem of "honesty" and "relevance" in the classroom. I also remembered a section in John Holt's What Do I Do Monday? that encouraged me to give journal-writing a try:

By what we do in school as well as what we say, we convey to children that words, talk, writing, are not an expression and extension of oneself, but things that one uses to influence, to manipulate, to get things out of other people. This may be an important reason why so many young people, particularly among our best students, are turning so angrily away from the written word, or even words altogether. Even more than the unsuccessful students, they have been using words dishonestly in school, to manipulate their teachers and to get whatever rewards were to be had. (p. 166)

The honest use of words, then, in talk or writing, is an act first of self-awareness, and then of self-expression... Which comes first? Do we need self-awareness in order to write, or do we write in order to gain self-awareness? Neither comes first; they grow together. (pp. 167-8)

The structure of the journal program, then, had to encourage honest writing, and hopefully would foster self-awareness (on the part of the teacher as well as the students) and effective communication. With these thoughts in mind I came up with the following objectives.

Objectives

- (1) To provide a non-threatening writing situation in which children feel free to express themselves honestly and to write about those things of immediate interest and concern to them;
- (2) To help children become more aware of the external world and how it affects their own lives by providing a record of observations and impressions upon which they can reflect;

- (3) To provide the teacher, as journal-reader, with important and useful information about the interests and needs of individual students;
- (4) To provide the teacher, as journal-writer, with a daily record of observations and impressions which may be useful in planning relevant learning activities;
- (5) To serve as a medium for the free exchange of ideas and feelings between teacher and student, thus facilitating mutual trust and understanding.

Rules

In an attempt to structure the journal program so that the above objectives could be met, I worked out the following four rules that would govern the program:

- (1) Everyone is required to make an entry every day, although the children are encouraged to write in their journals whenever the need arises;
- (2) Journals are personal property and may not be read by other students without the permission of the author;
- (3) The teacher may read students' journals, and students may read the teacher's journal, but nothing written in a journal may be held against the writer; strict confidentiality is to be maintained;
- (4) Journals will not be graded.

Rationale for the Rules

It is important to consider the reasons behind these four rules, what they were designed to accomplish and why I felt they were necessary in meeting my objectives.

Rule 1 reflects my disenchantment with the idea of allowing children complete freedom in deciding whether or not to do something. My experience up to that time was that, more often than not, the children would choose not to do whatever I suggested. Because the journal program was important to me, I made it a requirement. And, although ideally I hoped the children would write in their journals whenever they felt the need to record an observation or feeling, I realized this would not insure a successful program; therefore, I required a daily entry in the hopes that journal writing would become what Glasser calls a "positive addiction".¹ I wanted the children to get into the habit of writing in their journals at least once a day. Even though at first this might involve some discomfort, I hoped that by the end of the year some children would be "positively addicted" to journal-writing. Judging from the responses on a questionnaire I handed out in May, this was the case for many.

Rules 2, 3 and 4 all have the same rationale; that is, to provide a non-threatening situation in which the children feel free to express themselves honestly and to write about those things of immediate concern to them. More specifically, Rule 2 stresses the idea of individual

¹Glasser defines "positive addiction" as a personal action that becomes a habit to the degree that one feels uncomfortable when that action is not performed. What makes this addiction "positive" is the performer's awareness that completing the action is beneficial to his or her own well-being. A good example of a positive addiction is jogging. Jogging is not necessarily a pleasant act, especially in the early stages, but once it becomes a part of a daily routine, not jogging can leave the addict feeling somehow unfulfilled. Glasser contends that, aside from the obvious benefits of a positive addiction--in the case of jogging the health benefits--the mere knowledge on the part of the addict that he or she is doing something worthwhile, although not always pleasant, can build a positive self-image which can affect other areas.

ownership and privacy. Not many things children do in school belong exclusively to them, or are private. My hope was that Rule 2 would encourage the children to write honestly about themselves, "honest" in the sense that they would be writing for themselves, not for the teacher.

Rule 3 appears to contradict the idea of personal ownership and privacy stated in Rule 2, but I felt it was important that I have access to the children's journals. In order to alleviate the potentially threatening fact that I, as teacher, would be reading what the children wrote, I included as part of Rule 3 the qualifying conditions that nothing written in their journals would be discussed with others, and that nothing in their journals would be used against them. I hoped that these conditions of confidentiality and impunity would relieve the onus of teacher intervention, and my hopes were confirmed by the honest writing which did in fact predominate in the children's journals.

Finally, Rule 4 was included to remove the last roadblock to honest writing--the traditional threat of being compared with other students.

The ultimate success or failure of the journal program depended on structuring the program in such a way that the children felt free to express themselves openly and honestly. If the journals were to be valuable, both to the children and to me, they had to be honest. If the children had written to please me they would have gained little sense of self-awareness, nor would their ability to express themselves honestly have been improved. Also, as the teacher-reader I would have gained little, if any, insight into the real concerns and feelings of the children. With these thoughts in mind, and armed with my five

objectives and my four rules, I introduced the journal program to the children.

Introducing the Idea to the Class

It was the first week in December when, amidst the chaos of an evolving "open" classroom, I introduced my journal idea to the children. As with my previous "ideas", it was met with a chorus of "Oh No's!" and "Ughs". Undaunted I pressed on. I passed out 39¢ spiral-bound notebooks to each child, with the following stipulations: (1) that the children pay me back the 39¢; and (2) that these notebooks be used solely for journal-writing. I then laid down the four inviolate rules that would govern the journal program. Having delineated the rules I asked the children to think about some things they would write in their journals. Someone suggested writing about what they did today. This seemed to satisfy everybody and they wanted to know if they should start now. Because I wanted journals to reflect more than just what we did today, I suggested three other possibilities: (1) What I wished had happened today (an attempt to get at the children's real interests); (2) How I felt today; and (3) What the world looked like today. We discussed each of these possibilities and I gave some examples of each type. The children seemed to understand all but the last one, "What the world looked like today". I stressed the importance of using our senses in observing and exploring the external world, in order to better understand our relationship to that world. The children were still unsatisfied, so I talked about the uniqueness of each individual observer and how the world looks different to everyone, depending on their point-of-view and their past experiences. The children were getting restless; they did

not want my rhetoric, just a simple example. Okay. John may see a blue car drive past the window, that's all. But to Nancy that is not just a blue car, it is a Super Stock Chevy with mag wheels and dual exhausts that turns a quarter in just over 12 seconds. A sigh of relief from the class.

At this point someone asked if they could draw pictures in their journals. Certainly. I reemphasized that the journals were personal property and that everyone should feel free to express themselves in whatever way they desired. Some snickering. Immediately a girl in the back of the room asked if they could use "swear" words in their journals. Giggles and more snickers. The children were testing me to see if I meant what I said. I stuck to my guns and said that they should use whatever language they felt was necessary to express their feelings. The children seemed satisfied for the moment, but there were still some skeptical faces. The idea that they could write anything at all in their journals was not easy for them to accept.

Finally we talked about why we were writing journals in the first place. Of course the first response was, "Because you are making us do it." Granted. I added that, given the fact that everyone has to keep a journal anyway, what useful purposes might we make of them? Someone said it might be neat to read back over them when we are older. Someone else said that it would be a good way to get feelings out. Very good. I added that I thought my journal would be useful because I could write about what was happening, or not happening, in the room and maybe get some ideas about how to make the room better for all of us. At this point we stopped talking and started writing.

CHAPTER II

THE STUDENT AS JOURNAL-WRITER

In this chapter I have attempted to make some general statements about both the process and the product of the children's journal-writing. However, I labored under the strong belief that generalizations, being only half true at best, are potentially misleading. The only way one can get a true sense of a child's journal-writing experience is to be that child. The next best thing is to observe that child through time, read his or her journal from cover to cover, and talk about it. Neither of these alternatives is available to the reader. I suggest that the reader take the general comments in this chapter, and throughout this paper, with a grain of salt, and read through the children's entries (Appendix A) to get a truer sense of the children's writing.

Early Journal Entries

The first week of journal-writing was a smashing success. The children were excited about having their very own notebooks in which to write anything they wanted. Entries, for the most part, were lengthy and detailed and covered a wide range of topics. Everything we had talked about as constituting valid journal entries was included, plus a variety of other topics ranging from poems to political polemics. From the beginning the children's style was idiosyncratic and as varied as the individuals themselves. Every kind of writing implement was

used--pencils, pens of all colors, markers and crayons. The language was direct and colorful, with some children making great use of expletives. Several entries were confessional in nature, relating some "bad" thing the writer had gotten away with. The children were testing the rules of confidentiality and impunity and discovering that I was serious about them.

The variety of the children's responses, in terms of both style and subject matter, and the honesty of their writing, indicated to me that the rules were working. If the children had all written alike, in a predictable and uniform manner, then I would have had to reconsider the structure of the program. Everyone seemed to feel good about keeping journals and the future looked brighter than ever. Then, mid-way through the second week, almost as if it were predestined, interest began to wane.

Problems Arise--Attempts to Deal With Flagging Interest

During the first week-and-a-half the children had written in their journals when they felt like it and with little or no prodding from me. Suddenly I found several journals that had not been written in for two or three days. Also more and more children were copping out with entries such as "Today was sad," or "It was a good day." We held a class meeting to discuss the problem. The consensus seemed to be that there was nothing to write about and that the whole thing was boring. At this point I launched into an impassioned speech, prepared and rehearsed the night before, on the power of writing, the importance of using one's senses in observing the world, the beauty and power of words and imagination. I explained that some of my own best writing

originated in daydreams when I was bored with what was going on around me. I talked about how good I felt after I had poured out my feelings in my journal, gotten the hate and the pain down on paper so that I could examine it and maybe even understand it better. And I reemphasized the limitless possibilities of language, how each one of us has the power to describe things no one else has ever seen in quite the same way. The children stared at me as if I were half crazy, a raving madman. I have no way of knowing how many heard what I was saying, but for several days afterward there was a renewed outpouring of intense feelings.

Two other complaints came out of our discussion: (1) that it was too noisy in the room to concentrate on writing; and (2) that the children could not remember what had happened during the day. In order to deal with these problems the following adjustments were made in the journal program. First, there would be a specified time each day for journal-writing, a 15 minute period near the end of the day when everyone would be quiet and writing in their journals. This did not mean that the children could not write in their journals at other times during the day, but it did insure a quiet period for those who needed it.

To solve the problem of forgetfulness we agreed to review the events of the day prior to journal-writing time. My fears that this would somehow define legitimate subject matter, and therefore limit the variety of responses to a given day, were never realized. In fact very few students made use of this information and the practice finally ceased.

One additional practice was instituted in an attempt to inject new life into the journal-writing program. I began to write comments

about individual entries on slips of paper and to insert them into the children's journals. This proved to be a useful tool in stimulating reluctant journalists and in reinforcing positive writing behavior.

From this point on I allowed the journal program to follow its own course. No further adjustments were made. We did, on occasion, talk as a whole group about our journals and how we were doing. I also continued to read the children's journals as often as possible (less and less as the year progressed and energy dissipated), and to conference with individuals about their writing.

Types of Journal Entries

This section deals primarily with the kinds of things the children tended most often to write about in their journals. Before discussing some of these "popular journal topics" I want to make some general observations about classifying children's writing.

I found it impossible to put the children's journal entries into neat little categories. The children wrote on a wide range of topics in a variety of styles. Some children seemed to be more concerned with certain kinds of events than with others, but even this generalization does not hold consistently for any one child. In order to get some feeling for the kinds of things that seemed most important to an individual child one must view each entry in the context of the total journal-writing experience. For this reason I have avoided excerpting from journals in order to illustrate a certain "type" of entry. Again, I refer the reader to the children's own writing in Appendix A in order to get a better sense of the journal-writers and what kinds of things they feel are important.

The most common type of journal entry dealt with the daily classroom routine. These entries were factual statements, usually written in chronological order. They showed very little effort on the part of the child to evaluate the activities or the child's own response to it. But, on the other hand, the mere act of writing down what happened during the day required some reflection on the part of the writer, even if he or she is not self-consciously aware of it. Although the type of entry dealing with the routine events of the day occurred with the highest frequency in the children's journals, this does not necessarily mean that the children considered this kind of entry to be the most important kind.

In terms of the intensity of the language and emotional response, the most important kind of entry was that dealing with personal relationships, often a conflict relationship. Included in this category were peer group interaction and teacher-child conflict. A great deal of energy was evident in entries of this type. The children's writing reflected a deep concern for finding their place in the social structure as defined by the classroom, and for the injustices which they perceived making their lives so complicated and painful.

Another type of personal relationship which was written about with a great deal of energy, especially toward the end of the year, was the boy-girl relationship. The class moved from a position of two hostile enemy camps (boys versus girls) at the beginning of the year, to a much more integrated (sexually) group toward the end of the year. As budding romances blossomed, so did journal entries on this subject, often characterized by flowery language and blissful prose. Of course the heartbreak also took up a great deal of space and energy, and

elicited some of the most powerful language, both in harshness and in tenderness. When the children were writing about things that were really important and deeply felt, they wrote masterfully.

Other subjects the children wrote about in their journals, although they appeared less frequently than routine happenings and with less intensity than personal and social relationships, were family problems, personal and/or humorous anecdotes, and the weather. Some children also wrote down their observations on what other people in the room were doing, along with appropriate comments. Because the children knew that I would be reading their journals, and that I would accept any kind of writing at all, they often used their journals as a gripe sheet, complaining to me about someone in the room who was bugging them, or about my own behavior in the classroom. (I also had my supporters who wrote encouraging words to me periodically.)

Only a few events during the course of the year seemed to warrant almost universal comment in the children's journals. One incident involved a number of Junior High girls who came to our school to "beat up" one of the girls in our room. This melodrama lasted a couple of hours, involved my threatening to call the police if the girls did not leave immediately, and resulted in some of the longest, most detailed and interesting journal entries. Other events which elicited a number of journal entries throughout the year were our two-day trip to Winnipeg and the carnivals we put on at the school to raise money for the trip. Both of these "happenings" generated enough interest to merit inclusion in nearly all the journals.

CHAPTER III

THE JOURNAL QUESTIONNAIRE: AN ATTEMPT AT EVALUATION

Rationale

As the year drew to a close I began to consider ways to get the children to reflect on their experience as journal-writers and to grapple with the problem of evaluating their own writing. I decided that a Journal Questionnaire would be an effective way to accomplish both ends. In addition to serving as an evaluative tool for the children, the Questionnaire would provide me with information which might be useful in designing subsequent journal programs.

The Questions

If the Journal Questionnaire were to be valuable as an evaluative tool, the questions had to be as open-ended as possible, in order to allow for, and encourage, a wide range of responses. With this in mind I developed the Questionnaire included as Appendix C. Only question #1 is strictly a fact question and was intended to get the children to read through their journals. The other questions require the children to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the information in their journals, necessitating higher levels of thinking.²

²Bloom's taxonomy was very useful in developing the Journal Questionnaire. See Arthur A. Carin and Robert B. Sund, Developing Questioning Techniques: A Self-concept Approach (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1971) pp. 53-72.

For the most part I was pleased with the children's responses to the Questionnaire. Getting the children to think about what they were doing, to begin to reflect on their experiences and to begin evaluating those experiences, was a problem throughout the year. The children were much more interested in "doing" than in "evaluating". The children objected to filling out the Journal Questionnaire, but I explained that it was important to me and they accepted that. Because the children did not feel a personal need to evaluate their journal-writing, and because they were doing it for my benefit, their responses on the Questionnaire do not seem as honest as their journal entries.

Using the criterion that the best questions are those that elicit the best answers, questions eight (8), ten (10) and thirteen (13) come out on top. Examples of the responses to each of these questions are offered below:

Question #8 - Looking back over your own journal, what can you learn about yourself?

- A: How I felt, what some problems were and how to solve them.
- A: How I got to know people better, like now their my friend but then they were strangers.
- A: Well how mean selfish I can be and how nice I can be to.
- A: What I did that I got mad at.
- A: That I don't get mad at people cause I write the madness in my journal.
- A: My mistakes - what I should spend more time on (to Learn).
- A: the silly things we do and say and fight over
- A: lots what made me mad and happy
- A: I hated Glenn he was my worst enemy -----
- A: That I get into alot of fights with alot of girls

Question #10 - How have YOU changed since the first of the year? (Use your journal as a starting place to answer this question.)

A: I have changed alot. But I don't know how I changed. REALLY.

A: I was not as sassy at the first of the year but now I am but I wish I wasn't.

A: I haven't been such a baby.

A: I write about more personal things now.

A: I have learned more about other people.

A: Well I at first was planning to not have a good time in school. But now I do have a good time in school.

A: I was kinda shy at first, then I kinda got to talken to people.

A: I wrote a lot better things and had a lot longer entries.

A: I've changed cause now I am not being so mean to people.

A: I feel more freely now than I did.

A: I'm not so tight on writing. I get along better with some people better than others.

Question #13 - Use the rest of this page to write down your own feelings about your journal, how it has helped you, how you have used it, how it shows your own growth, etc.

A: I liked the experience of keeping a journal. It helped me to learn some feelings.

A: My journal is good when I don't have nothing to do or I'r mad.

A: I got all my thoughts out what I wanted to say. Write in it everyday. Mean, mad, grouchy, happy.

A: It's been a good friend to me and helped me in some ways.

A: I like to write in it sometimes when I have a good day. I think we should have a good entry even if it is not a good day and do not right slopy I will try to right better now.

- A: I really like writing in my journal because it tells what you've done and how you feel and it helps me out when I feel bad.
- A: I like my journal alot but I don't like to write every day. If we could write when we wanted to I would be alot happier about it.
- A: I hate to write. I can't remember the things happened. But I like to look back and laugh.
- A: I liked it and it has helped me write better.
- A: I use it to complain about other people so they won't beat me up.
- A: Well it has help me to know myself better and other people.
- A: I liked to right in it sometimes and my stories I liked my stories and pomes
- A: It really didn't help me really I just wanted to write in it to pass time by.

Evaluation of the Journal Questionnaire

The Journal Questionnaire did provide the children with a chance to think back over the year. However, the process of filling out a questionnaire was distasteful to most of the children, and they did not spend a great deal of time thinking through the questions. I think the Questionnaire would have been more valuable to the children and to me if I had followed up with individual conferences in which the children and I discussed their answers and probed deeper into the questions. The information gained from the completed Questionnaires did help me get a better sense of the children's reaction to journal-writing.

PART II

USING CLASSROOM JOURNALS: THE TEACHER AS JOURNAL-READER

CHAPTER IV

USING INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM CHILDREN'S JOURNALS

General Comments

Reading the children's journals helped me understand the children better, their language, interests, needs, and fears. This understanding is by far the most valuable use I made of the children's journal-writing. Having a better understanding of what was important to the children, of how they thought and felt, helped me communicate much more effectively. Through the children's journals I was able to enter their own unique worlds, walk around, observe and come away feeling closer to them. It improved my ability to empathize with the children's problems, which often seemed petty to me but which were vital and all-consuming to them. Below are some specific uses I made of the information contained in the children's journals.

Specific Uses

Because the children wrote so often and so well about social conflict and personal feelings, journals were a natural resource for ideas to discuss in Magic Circle.³ Also many of my ideas for Values Clarification strategies came from the journals. These activities helped to defuse some potentially explosive situations, and to infuse some positive

³Magic Circle: In my case, a whole group discussion centering on feelings and personal problems.

social behavior. Because the feelings we discussed were real, and current, the children felt that the experience was relevant and not contrived. A further comment on relevance is appropriate here. Because it is practically impossible for a teacher to read every journal every day, many conflict situations written about in the journals will be discovered by the teacher too late for immediate action. However, if a teacher observes a conflict brewing in the classroom, it might be useful to read the journals of the individuals involved.

The children's journals also served as a focus for individual conferences. I tried to have a conference with each child at least once a week. At the first of the year I found these conferences to be somewhat awkward and not very productive. The conferences were much more successful when I began using the child's journal as a starting point.

As I mentioned above, reading the children's journals helped me discover some of the children's interests. Several interest centers were initiated as a result. Furthermore I was able to get several children started on individual projects which satisfied their expressed desire to do something different. I got the idea for several classroom activities from reading the children's journals; for example, a unit on drugs complete with a guest lecturer, and a class beautification project.

The children sometimes wrote about me in their journals, commenting on some aspect of my appearance or behavior. In this respect the children's journals served as a mirror for me. I was able to get a better idea of what I looked like to the children, how I came across in class, and what I did that pleased or irritated them. It was not always a pleasant experience--reading what the children had to say

about me--but it helped me make some changes in my style and made me more conscious of my classroom behavior.

Another valuable use I made of the children's journals was in the area of spelling. I wanted the children to learn to spell those words which were already a part of their spoken and written vocabulary, words they used every day. The journals provided me with an ideal resource for these words. Each child received an individual spelling sheet each week, with six to ten words they had misspelled in their journals. Each word was to be used in a sentence, broken down into syllables, and written six times. Words that continued to be misspelled continued to appear on the weekly spelling sheet. The spelling in the journals did improve during the year, without the children become self conscious about writing in their journals.

Finally, although I did not make use of the journals in this way, I think the information contained in the journals would be useful in figuring out the best way to utilize classroom space. The children's mobility patterns were often evident in their journal writing. Another use would be grouping the children for certain activities based on the social arrangements revealed in their writing.

PART III

THE TEACHER AS JOURNAL-WRITER

CHAPTER V

GENERAL REFLECTIONS OF A JOURNAL-WRITER

Keeping a journal was a new experience for me, and the children and I encountered many of the same problems. Because I was aware that the children would be reading my journal, my early entries were overly self-conscious and stilted. As I became more involved in my own journal-writing I became less conscious that other people might read what I was writing, my style became more fluid and the content more personal. There were times when I, like the children, really did not feel like writing in my journal--there are many comments to that effect in my journal. I also was plagued by distractions--classroom noise, interruptions--but these became less of a problem as I became more and more addicted to journal-writing. I experimented with a number of different styles, and finally settled into a stream of consciousness and/or "detached eye" kind of writing.

My journal entries themselves are much more illuminating than my general comments about those entries. If the reader is interested in getting a better sense of my experience as a journal-writer, and perhaps more importantly, a better sense of my experience as a teacher, selections are found in Appendix B.

Kinds of Entries

Three quite different types of entries seem to dominate my journal. Basically they reflect different points of view. I have

labeled these: (1) The detached observer; (2) The philosopher/cynic; and (3) The teacher/pragmatist.

As the detached observer I would sit back, assume an objective posture, and write down what I saw in the classroom. Sometimes I would write about the way the room looked, the arrangement of desks, what was on the walls or hanging from the lights. More often I would note what the children were doing. Once I was able to remove myself psychologically from the activity going on around me, I felt very comfortable simply recording what was taking place. At first I found myself analyzing everything and commenting on the "goodness" or "badness" of what I was seeing. But later I obtained a greater degree of objectivity and was content to merely observe and record. There were times when assuming this perspective--that is, putting my writing between me and the children--helped me relax and compose myself.

Probably my most intense and emotion-packed journal-writing came out of the philosopher/cynic stance. It was a difficult year for me, filled with misgivings about what I was doing, or not doing, and with doubts about my ability to cope with the "realities" of an open classroom. I began to question many of the basic tenets of open education, or, more correctly, my ability to make an open classroom work. Consequently my journal was peppered with rantings on open education, on children in general, and on the difficulty of maintaining personal sanity in a classroom. In retrospect many entries of this type appear to be exercises in self-indulgence and self-pity, but they were valuable in providing an emotional outlet, a safety valve. Also some valuable perceptions which might have been lost if I had not written them down immediately.

The third kind of entry, characterized by the teacher/pragmatist point of view, appears much less frequently than the first two. This type of entry was concerned primarily with the kinds of learning problems certain individuals were having, and some possible solutions that might be affected. For example I might reflect on a problem some child had had during a math group, or I might comment on so-and-so's difficulty in using punctuation. Although I think that these kinds of observations are valuable, they did not seem to fit well into my personal journal. Later in the year I started another notebook, with a page reserved for each child, in which I wrote down observations of this nature.

Usefulness

Keeping a journal was an invaluable experience for me for a number of reasons. In trying to define the purely utilitarian benefits of writing a journal, I realized that my own journal transcended mere usefulness; it approached a work of art. The process of writing in a journal was a form of catharsis, like all art. I experimented with different writing styles and modes of expression. In a sense my journal is a self-portrait, complete with imperfections and cosmetic flaws. Keeping a journal gave me a feeling of creation, of making something that was uniquely mine. As in all acts of creation the end result, the product, is important, but the significance of the act itself must not be overlooked. And finally, before turning to the more mundane rationalizations for keeping a journal, I found that my journal-writing was more honest than most of my other writing. Writing for myself, not for other people, was non-threatening and encouraged freer, less inhibited self-expression.

Another value of keeping my own journal was that it provided me with a record of the year, the peaks the valleys, the pain and joy. Reading back over my journal now I can relive many of my experiences in and out of the classroom. In addition to the simple pleasure of reminiscing, I am able to put the year into some sort of perspective, to gain a sense of proportion. I am reassured that some good things DID, in fact, happen in the classroom. It is easy to remember only the good things that happened during the year, or, if one is so inclined, only the bad things, and forget that both good and bad things are a normal part of everyday life in the classroom. My journal helps me keep this important fact in mind.

I used my journal throughout the school year to get a better understanding of the children, and I was amazed at how our perceptions of a given "day" were often very different. Sometimes I was able to design a relevant activity based on my observations of what the children seemed to be interested in doing at the moment. In general it was useful having a record of my impressions of what was going on in the room for purposes of planning and evaluation.

Keeping my own journal in the classroom contributed to the success of the journal-writing program in another significant way. Because I took my own journal-writing seriously, and was obviously totally immersed in my own writing, I served as a positive model for the children's own writing. The children often commented on my love of writing. One boy even referred to me as a "journal-writing freak". And journal-writing was something that the children and I had in common, a shared experience which brought us closer together.

PART IV

EVALUATION OF THE CLASSROOM JOURNAL PROGRAM

CHAPTER VI

LOOKING BACK: A PERSONAL APPRAISAL

While writing this paper I had an interesting conversation with a fellow intern which helped me to see, perhaps for the first time, something very important about journal-writing and about learning and schools in general. In the course of our conversation he commented: "Wouldn't it be neat if you included in your paper some of the children's early entries, where they didn't write much at all, and then showed how they progressed through the year until their last entries, which were really great?"

"Well," I said, "that would be neat, but it didn't happen that way. Some of the kids wrote beautiful entries at first and then went steadily downhill. Others went along not writing much at all, then peaked for a couple of weeks, and then went back to where they started. If I tried to justify my journal program in terms of the steady progress of the children's writing, I'd either have to admit failure or be a damned liar."

But the program was not a failure; I feel very strongly about that and I think the children would agree. And I am not being dishonest. The problem is in equating "success" with "steady progress". As a rather active learner myself, I have difficulty seeing my learning as a straight line slowly moving upward on a graph. I learn in fits and starts; I have periods of intense intellectual activity followed by longer periods

of little activity at all. I am inclined to allow the children to grow in their own idiosyncratic way.

But there is more to the problem than variations in learning styles or differing growth patterns. What is often considered "progress" in the classroom is actually an increased ability on the part of the students to please the teacher, to say or to write what they know the teacher wants them to. I question whether or not progress, defined in these terms (either consciously or unconsciously), is a valid goal in education. I did not intend to undermine the educational system by instituting a journal-writing program in my classroom. What I wanted to do was to provide the children with the opportunity to think and write for themselves, without having to worry about pleasing me. In most other areas I tended to judge the children's "progress" by how well they measured up to my expectations at the end of the year. I think this tendency to judge the children's "growth" in terms of our own values, expectations and quirks, is widespread and maybe even unavoidable. But it is an area that requires a great deal more thought and discussion, at least in my own mind. In the meantime I will continue to provide at least one activity in which the children can grow or not grow in their own unique way.

Before considering the degree to which my objectives for the journal program were met, I want to compare the children's journal-writing with the other forms of writing in the classroom. I found that the personal nature of journals, the privacy and sense of ownership which journals afford, lends itself to a more vital and dynamic style of expression. Compared to the more formal creative writing exercises

which we had throughout the year, journal entries were more varied in their subject matter, calligraphy and degree of experimentation. And they were more honest in the sense I have suggested above; that is, they were written for the writer's own use and not for the teacher's sake.

Were My Objectives Met?

In Chapter I I set forth five objectives for the journal-writing program. I will restate each objective here and comment on the degree to which each one was met.

Objective #1 - "To provide a non-threatening writing situation in which children feel free to express themselves honestly and to write about those things of immediate interest and concern to them." This was by far the most important objective and also the one which proved to be most successful. The children did write honestly and directly about things that were important to them. If nothing else had been accomplished by the journal program I would still have considered it a success.

Objective #2 - "To help the children become more aware of the external world and how it affects their own lives by providing a record of observations and impressions upon which they can reflect." The degree to which this objective was met is difficult for me to evaluate. The children's journal-writing did not display a great deal of reflection, but it did indicate a real awareness of the external world, especially the social universe in which the children lived, and how this "world" (read "other people") affected them.

Objective #3 - "To provide the teacher, as journal-reader, with important and useful information about the interests and needs of

individual students." I have already discussed the usefulness of the children's journals in Chapter IV. The children's journal-writing was valuable to me in trying to meet the needs of individual students, and the classroom at large.

Objective #4 - "To provide the teacher, as journal-writer, with a daily record of observations and impressions which may be useful in planning relevant learning activities." Again, I have dealt with this at length in another chapter (Chapter V). As I stated there, my own journal was valuable to me in many more ways than were set out in this objective.

Objective #5 - "To serve as a medium for the free exchange of ideas and feelings between teacher and student, thus facilitating mutual trust and understanding." Originally I envisioned the children reading my journal and me reading theirs and talking about each other's ideas and feelings. But after the first week most of the children stopped reading my journal, probably because it was difficult to read and because my lengthy entries and vocabulary were intimidating. However I did talk to the children a great deal about the ideas and feelings in their journals, and I feel strongly that this helped us understand each other better.

Personally I felt that the journal program was a great success, and most of the children enjoyed it too. The program would have been even more valuable to all concerned if I had been able to keep up with the children's entries. But then, there is never enough time during the day (or night) to do all the important things that we, as teachers, should do. The journal program did provide a valuable experience for

both the students and myself. It even turned out to be more successful than I had originally hoped. I strongly recommend initiating a program such as this for anyone interested in providing a worthwhile experience for the children and for themselves.

APPENDIX AExcerpts From Children's Journals:The Children Speak for Themselves

[Author's Note: The typewritten word, HATE, even when underlined and written in all capital letters, in no way conveys the intensity and power of the same word written across a full page in black marking pen. The children's experimentation with calligraphy, an important part of their writing, is lost to the reader of this transcription. In spite of this limitation I am certain that the reader will have a better sense of the children after reading their entries below.

In order to achieve a better sense of continuity and context, I have excerpted at length from five students' journals, rather than sparingly from a greater number of journals. Finally, the children's names have been changed, in keeping with the provisions of confidentiality and impunity.]

Benny T. [Benny wrote a total of 20 pages in his journal.]

12/3 -- Today on the ice I played tag with mr Prentice, Julli, Karla, Chuck and Marty for 20 min.

12/4 -- This morning I came to school we took lunch count and got to work. At 10:30 we went out for recess. At 10:45 we came in and by 10:50 we were working again. The day went fast.

12/6 -- Today we went to the new law enforcement center.

12/12 -- A squormy thing named Phil crawling along the hall window.

- 12/13 -- Today I helped Jess make a Christmas picture that is on the wall in the back of the room. Looking back at my journal so far I think my writing its stupid.
- 1/11 -- The day was great. We went to the gym again today at recess and played with the gym dollies, basketball, and floor hockey set. Sorry godda run.
- 1/14 -- We just got done with lunch count. Now everyone is talking and puting up the shades. Now Mr Prentice is reading a story about a boy named Mark. And Susan is typing while Marty is burning something. Now Phil and Jack are talking.
- 1/16 -- Today I watched a play about two kids that got thrown in jail for stealing from a candy store and escaped.
- 1/22 -- Today was a good day. I played cards did some math and some reading. Today I also went to tutor for miss stein from 9:30 to 10:00.
- 2/9 -- Today I played cards with Jess and Chuck. I also listened to some records.
- 2/13 -- Today I helped Marty with a poster we got picters from boys life and newtime.
- 2/14 -- The day was a fun day. Today I gave out valentines. And also helped Marty give out valentines
- 2/20 -- Today I thought of a magazine for the school. And I drew the cover for it. I did the rest of my work for the week and boy am I glad.
- 2/26 -- Today I did some more of my work. At recess I am going to play basketball with Mike [student teacher]. Good night Prentice
- 2/27 -- Today I finished the rest of my work thank god.
- 3/1 -- Today I helped paint a bird and worm and then it got messed up. Now we have three chairs and a couch in the room
- 3/5 -- Today I did some more work on my science project for the fair. Mike is doing a good job with the class. I like Mike and I hope others do to dont you
- 3/6 -- Today I entered in the science fair and won a third place ribon with Kenny K.s help.
- 3/12 -- Today I wrote a poem with walt ya good ol walt. I also went to a science class with Mike and ...
I liked it, I liked it.

- 3/13 -- Today Mike was half a day late for school. I am growing some flowers. Today at recess I won four boulders.
- 3/19 -- Today I made bombs out of sticks. Also made a callage.
- 3/20 -- Today was crumy without prentice. Today a did some more work.
- 3/25 -- Today I made some paper airplanes. And did some work and painting. I like Mick E. better today and always will.
- 3/28 -- Today I am writing in my journal from the new silent boxes. Today has been a very good day for me. I have not been called smelly or been scared to be sat by. And this makes me very happy to know. Everybody has been nice to me for a chang.
- 3/30 -- Today I drew a floorplane for a Ideal class room and I like it. I hope Mr Prentice likes it to.
- 4/8 -- Today I did lots of coloring with my markers. This morning when we came to school the chickens were hatched all but three one was roten another had borned the eye the other we do not know about yet. tomorow we are going to do more work on the carnival for the class to go to wenipeg in may and stay for a while. GOOD DAY SIR
- 4/10 -- TODAY I HELD THE CHICKENS ALOT!
- 4/16 -- Today we are going to play baseball. The window in the corner was broken in the shape of a bunny rabbitt. It's almost recess so I'll have to say good by Sir.
- 4/19 -- Today I finished my work for the week before dinner so I could play baseball this afternoon.
- 4/24 -- "Today we are going to a track meet," resited Mr. Prentice. There seems to be only four kids writing in their journal today. Today at recess I played baseball with Kenny K. and Jess except last recess when I was at the track meet at the deaf school.
- 4/27 -- Today I found out how to draw a certen star. I put one on my journal and two on my folder. This is the last week before we go to wenipeg. [Ink drawing 'of star below entry]
- 5/2 -- Today we talked about winepeg. Today no one seemed to like me I don't know why but it hurts my feelings. And I wish people would like and not hate me like they do. I like them but they don't like me and that makes me sad to know. So long Mr. Prentice.
- 5/3.-- Today is the last day before the feild trip to winepeg. I am all set. I have my new sleepingbag just for this trip.

My suitcase is all packed and ready to go for two days and one night. I get five dollars to spend there.

- 5/16 -- This is the last entry of the year. The year seemed to go very nice for me. I made new freinds this year. This year has been the the best year in this school. A little bit of this year was bad for me. I like the way the room improved sence the begining of the year. I manly like the reading corner. The thing I didn't like was my markers being stolen.

Becky R. [Becky filled about 80 pages in her journal.]

- 12/3 -- Today isn't a bad day but isn't the greatest day ether. Its a pretty good day. Well we wrote sentices about things that Mr. Prentice said like swing. At noon Jane called Susan a Fucker. They had a fight about Jane's boyfriend. Susan wrote me saying that wasn't very nice and that she's never called any one that before in her life. And that if Jane said that any more she would slap her face. And Susan said she should show Mr. Prentice & Mr. Lagton But she never. Because they made up. Then we went skate & had a gas! Then we came back to write in the Journal. And to clean up.
- 12/5 -- Today so far is rotten we wrote sentice again Mr. Prentice told us to write sentice. And some of us never got picked. He said those who feel they never got pick & think they should, put there hands up so some did except me. I never because I would look like a baby so I never. I got to go to cooking And made Popcorn balls. What fun.
- 12/6 -- Today is fun day. We went to the Police Stacon. And got locked in a jail. Well that was fun. But when we got back to school. We had more fun. That is just Jane, Nell, Mary Ann Cindy and me. Because at recess we went to the bathroom and got some wet paper toles and ploged up the sink in the girls bathroom then started the water running and June and Carol told on us And we ran into the bathroom and Mr. Prentice seen us and got Mrs. Igon to come to get us.
- 12/8 -- Today we went to the farm Nell came with we played hide & go sick and that was fun. In the morning a cow had a calf & we were in there to help my uncle put name tag in the ear. And we went in the same pen that the cow had a calf but she never chased us then we went in a nother stall and she charged us but she couldn't get us it was fun. Then we went home and I went to Volley ball.
- 12/13 -- Today is dole I lost two cake pan and I called my mom and told her that I lost her cake pans and she said that I better keep looking for them and I said what if I don't find it. She

said she was very disaponted and she said by and I said by in a crying way. And I started crying. I feel really bad about it. Right now I thinking how bad I feel about doing that. And how frighten I am to go into the hospital...

- 12/14 -- Today is fun Susan lyed to me and Jane and she is trying to brake up Jane and Doug because her & Greg broke up and so she thinks Jane & Doug should brake up. And she won't fight us because she thinks she can't fight because she might have a attack. And she said to me that she had a white horse, and 2 snow mobile and other white lye's I would like to beat the blake out of her.
- 12/17 -- Today is ok I saposе Susan told me why she was lieing so much And I made up with her. And after recess we went to the Mary's to put mackup on then we had to come to the room.
- 12/19 -- Today Mick came and kicked me in the back and I turnd around and I got up And kicked him back then he hit me & we started fighting. Mr. Preince grab us by the back and that we know were not saposе to fight And bald us out And I sat down and wrote in my Journal.
- 1/3 -- Today was bad Well not really. But We have to sit in rows and it ok for me but I'd rather sit the way I want to. Today Mr. Prince wanted us to learn about steam ingens And we wern't interested. I think he was wrong about say girls are domb I think he should read about women house work.
- 1/23 -- Today is pretty good Roger came to our room and showed us slides of afreaka. Then we went to the room and starded to talk. Then Donna was talking to Debbie and they were planing to put on a joke and I was in on it. But I feel sorry for Connie G. Because were being mean. But she asked for it. I would tell you about it But it might not work.
- 1/28 -- Today is dumb Because today Jane and Me made a bet and I lost. So I owe Jane a doller and Then she said that if she can have the place where I was setting I would only owe her 50¢ and I got mad. And I wrote back and said Jane if you want that place so bad you can have it and I will pay you back. In fact you keep the doller you owe mom and I will pay mom back. And I went to the bathroom and so did Nell & Jane followed. And she said that I probley won't pay my own mom and that got me mad. I would never say that to Jane Because I would trust her But she can't trust me. That made me mad.
- 1/29 -- Today is dumb Because We call Susan at the hospital. I found out that Susan has a blood Clod in the back of the head I feel sorry for her. I would be afraid. Because you can die from it. A baby & a lady died from one. I hope she will get out pretty soon. Then we had a new lady for a music teacher

she was sad. And I found out that you can spell writting with to t's And now I am not going to pay Jane the \$1.00. And she's mad. And Nell is on Jane's side so she is play with Jane. And I am play with Carol and June. Nell is jeolose. At the Bath-room she ask if I wanted her to come up town with me & Carol & June & Lisa. And I said yes. And she said that I haven't been paying any atenson to her. And I said that she hasn't tryed to play with me and she said I never wanted to try. And she said she doesn't want to try either. She lied. I hate it when she lyes like that. Jane sometimes is a Baby. Because she has to have her way. I hate Nell when she lyes like that.

2/20 -- Today is o-k But I am mad at Prentice Because we went home to eat and Jane Susan & me ate at Neil's house and Nell let Cookie out side and Cookie ran away and we had to find her and I found her way down by the Pony ranch we take her home and went to school. And we meet Susan's Mom on the way and Susan brang her brother to school. And you gave us 45 min after school we were only 1/2 hour late. Bye

2/25-- [This entry was written in four different colors of ink.]
Today is o-k But we had a lot of accsitement Because Linda D. and Lara D. & another girl were school skipping and Mr. Prentice call this two guys and they came and fixed it up. Mr. Prentice how do you feel about those girls I mean Linda & those other girls? And how do you feel about Jane and Susan? Mr. Prentice do you think Susan was acting tuff? I kind of think she was to alittle. Susan is going to get beat up after school from Linda D. But if it is just Linda thats going to beat Susan up, she doesn't have to worry about it. Because Jane will be there. But I hope Susan & Jane beat the hell out of her. Because I hate Linda D.

2/28 -- Today is o-k But its the same as the other day. I don't know why But I feel lonly today. Nell and I used to be good friends But now were not so close. Nell would rather have Jane for a friend than me. You know tuesday when we were going to gymnastics I asked Nell to go with me and she said yes. Then when my family was eating lunch and Nell called and said Becky I want to go with Jane & Debbie instead of me. I felt so bad I could have started crying. But I held back the tears. Because I didn't want to act like a baby. Well I have to go now Because I have to do my job So so long. Bye.

3/5 -- Today is o-k But not much to do. Mr. Prentice thanks for the note in my journal it made me feel better.

3/27 -- Today Is Wonderful Because I feel great. I can't tell you why. Because it's personal. Well I am so happy I don't know what to say. I bet Susan is pretty happy to. Well what should I say. Well I came to school and Nell got sick then Jane and

some other girls went and told spook stories and then they told you Mr. Prentice and Mike and you two laughed and it was all true. I don't think that was very nice. But I am still happy very happy. Well I had better close for now. BYE!

3/28 -- Today is O-k. I am still happy. For the same reason as yesterday. I guess I can tell you why. Because Morris likes me and I like him. I think Jane is jelase But I don't care. Mr. Prentice don't tell no one! Bye!

4/2 -- Today is pretty good But Morris spilled some stuff in his eye and had to go to the Doctors and I started crying. Mr. Prentice you don't know how much I like Morris And then he came Back and I was releved. Then he started thinking that I don't like him But I do. In Music class he stared at me. I'm going to write him a letter if I dare. No I'm not. Because Susan is going to tell him that I like him. Well I had Better Close Now So Bye. P.S. I think to day is Wonderful don't you?

4/22 -- Today is o-k. But Jane doesn't like Gary she likes John P. and so does Connie G. and so they asked John if he likes Connie or Jane. Jane never told Gary so I feel sorry for Gary. Well I had better close. Bye.

5/1 -- Today is o-k. But I think it was fun Well Morris won't answer my letter. But I think he likes me. I would never want to brake up with Morris. Bye. P.S. I really like him.

5/8 -- Today is o-k. Mr. Prentice You are mean. Morris and I were NOT smooching under that coat. And I'm telling the truth. That Fucker Susan Pisses me off. First her and Jane read my Journal and Jane was truthful to tell me. Then Susan took my pen. BYE. P.S. I hate Susan today!

5/10 -- Today is sad Morris is a dirty son of a Betch he is durty! We broke up today at least he wants to brake up. He wants to go back to Lori N. well the HELL with it! Because he trying to blame it all on me. BYE!

Gary V. [Gary wrote 20 pages in his jcrnal; the only writing he did all year.]

12/3 -- When I came in it was loud but then me and Dave were fuleing around and Dave had milk in his hand and I bumpt him and it spild all over the teacher desk so we had to clen it up it spilt on the floor to. The teacher took lunch count and we did a test when we were done. The teacher got mad of the noise but he hallord at us and we shut up. I read drew pither talk and then read some more and look a rond and then teacher

Talk for about hafe hower. Then we did a test that last 15; min and then we had mucic for 20:m then we pick name's for chrismis and then stay in for reces and work some and look some read a book and then did math and the peple who got books read them but I didn't get one. And then the teacher talk for a wile and we had a little fun John desk fill down that was cool after we worked in this book but then I talk to Mick bout things and he was talk about Nixon He says that he dont like Nixon I Do a little. And I wached the dog and played with the dog bout he got to noisy that he had to go and then I sat a round doing nothing but riting this and it was so noise in the other 6 grad class room that we cude not do much but then we got door shut and I still con't fine to much to do. I didnt want to do my work so I raed a little bit talk to Mick and John for a wile and the teacher said the next won to talk will have to stay after for a wile so then we did a test it was fun it was a game and then I clean up and went home

12/5 -- I came in the class room and put my coat down and went in the other room and talk to the boy's and then Back and the teacher took luch count and handed paper's back I got two paper and we went over them and he talk for about 15: m and we listed and I talk to Mick we were talking about a book it had a hole buch of word's and then the teacher talk again we talk about word's and all kind's of thig's and then we did a test and went to lunch But John and I were fooling a round and I had to go on the stage and eat then when we were done I went in the room and tiped and fool a round and went in the other room and David was there and Tim and Steve then rest's was over and I went to my room and sat down and John was hiting Mick so I hit John and the teacher walk in and we had ssr for 20:m and Dave and I was fooling a roun and we all most had to rite 50 seteces saying (I am staying after school because I did not cooperate) then we had a movie and it was not to good and we took time to rite in this book

12/6 -- Wane I came in the school room it was the same but the teacher was mad agine cause was tring to take louch count then we played jused for a wile and then the teacher had a meting and we went out side for reces and wen we came in we did not do mouch but then we went to dinner then we fool around The dog teacher teach us How to bark and role over and play daed and do the duck watle and we thot He was stupid and he did not think we know how.

12/7 -- Wan we came in the school room it was sad and dume it was bad and dirty but that's was ok so that was sad thing to say but I did not think so I like it but then the dog teacher was up on it teaching how to talk and walk and we know how to do it but he don't care he think that we need to be teach something so he teach us that dummm so we do it but we mite get mad but

he just run's away that ant trew we run he don't he mite get mad but some of us don't care that ant trew I am a dum dum but that ant trew I hate football but that ant trew I like football I like work that ant trew I hate work I hate car's that ant trew I like cars I hate summer that ant trew I LIKE SUMMER don't you yes I like summer said me I like to make a snow man don't you Yes said me agin so wat if I'm all mix up I don't care do you no said me I like school ARE YOU CRAKING A JOKE said me

- 12/8 -- Wone time I had a littl bed it was sad and it had two eye's and four lege's and it talk like it was cold so my Mother went away for the weeken and I was all a lone and the bed that I told you about I thout it was cold because it didn't have no covers on it so then I put some on and it said thank you and I go your so sad I hate you so I toke the cover off him and he frose HA HA HA.
- 12/17 -- Once upon a time I had a dog name howndog because he cude get up on his feet and dance it was funny but he did it he can talk like he is singing he was fun to play with he did what he told him that's why he was fun he walk good and he ran good he did every thing good he was walking a cros the road and I said don't you know that is a red light he put his haed down and walk back and lade down on the side walk and when the light turn green he got up and walk with me like a good dog yeah that wrs the best dog I had in my life. When I was attacked by a baer and the dog help me but he got killed. I buryed him and I walk and walk and walk and walk and walk and walk
- 12/20 -- What I did today. I came in and sat down first Put Martys Present onder the tree then I sat down in my desk and talk to Dave we talk about going out to his farm this scmmmer to work because his Brother works and he don't have no won to help him so that's why then I went to the other room and talk I don't know wot we talk about.
- 2/18 -- Today it was not to bad so I sat and talked -- went up town and spent all my money and came home and not to much talk agane and walk around. I walk around a lot.
- 2/19 -- Today was sad and to much for me so I didn't do to much then the morning it was sad then part of the day was better than the morning so I got my work done -- so it got better on the day. See you tomorow.
- 2/20 -- To day was good I got my work don didn't get into much troble Just got hallared at We didn't do any work afer we got don with our work we played.
- 2/25 -- Today I came in and sat in my desk then I got up and put lunch cout down and walk to the other room talk there then came back

in the room and talk there to then the teacher came in and started class but the new janitor stuck up his bird and he got it trouble and gave him a lot of grief and he got mad then we told the teacher about him he didn't say nothing then Mick got hit by him and he got in trouble

- 2/26 -- Today re mane silent. If any body talk it was deadless so do not talk please for your sake we got a 2 min brake and did this and that. Both dum dum's were dum so we were dum to so if we were dum dum's they were dumer so I was happy for that so I feel better and so I don't care to much for two dumer dum dum's so we and my self felt a lot better so we do now play a round a lot so we mite look at them dum dum's once and a while but we don't look to long so we walked around and talk in a low voice and them dum dum's still holer at us. THAT'S IT
- 3/5 -- The day started out real good I liked the descushon grup it was fun then we had seilet writing it was fun I liked it then we talk and worked a little bit and work on the newspaper then came lunch I eat then went to the room the room was quite then came silet reading I liked that to it was fun to so good by for today.
- 4/30 -- It was a good day I got some work don but when I went home to get my chickens they were daed. Like no more chicken...
- 5/16 -- [Last entry] The year was pretty good somtimes. I raelly liked it the carnavil's we had we made money it turnd out very good. We went to winapeg we seen a lot of thing we ate good and every thing turn out just right I got in to trouble alot and did all my work for the week most of the time. We went on feeld trip's and some time's the trips weren't that good most of the time's they were good. The teacher was good and bad but that wasn't that bad teacher and I rote a book but it ant done yet but I read to books one was race around the world the next one was a little story I forgot. Next year if I get there it just won't be as good as this year I know we will have to go to other than won class 4 or 5 maybe more I will go to them all I ant going to skip if I can't help it.
This year went so fast

Lisa P. [Lisa filled over 120 pages in her journal.]

- 12/3 -- Today I was upset because we really couldn't go skating but Mr. Prentice was right, then it changed, we were going to go. Just luck, I Guess. I put on my skates and went to the rink. On the way I fell on the road and I broke through my pants (old)! When I was skating I learned how to do something but I don't know what its call it goes like this (illustration below)! Crossing your feet and making a circle like that. I had a good day today but I wish people would be more respect-

full everyone except Ann, she is about the most respectful person in the whole class and I mean it alot. Thank You Mr. Prentice for every thing you put up today and most of the year.

12/6 -- Today some of us flooded the sink & some of us told on the flooders. Outside we had a big yell arguement. Before that we had an interesting feild trip to the Law Enforcement Center, got locked in the juvenile, 2 mens & 1 ladies cells. The puppy went along too. I would hate to be there. (Man would I) Everyone is over the floods. (I think) I was walking around not really knowing what to do about the sink.

12/10 -- Nothing much happened this morning. But everything went very smoothly. Mr. Berg came & it was very interesting (what he said). I think the pencils thing didn't work very well, there are no more pencils left in the jar. Everyone but me always can think of 1000 things to say (I say about 20).

12/12 -- I think today will be a very good day. Everyone is so happy. Even though most of the outside is white or gray. Except Phil, he had to clean up a big mess. My desk feels like worms could crawl through it. That Santa in the corner britens up the room & makes people happier I think. This morning is going to be a good one. Everyone is decorating, you have to be more ore less an artist really to do much stuff. I'm not really much of an artist either. It might get alittle tooooooo decorated. (Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha). The back of the room isn't abit decorated. Everyone likes to sing 12 days of Christmas (I know!) The room is beautiful now/ I admit I didn't think so).

12/14 -- Today all the girls were happy (this morning) but this afternoon about all the boys seemed contented but not the girls, there had been about 3-5 arguments. About cheerleaders and everything, most of them are mad at Susan but me. I have nothing to be mad at her about. But I guess they really have some grudge against her (a big onetoo). I hope she doesn't think I have something against her. Because I really don't think I have something against her. I think she is nice. She has never done anything bad to me. I decided to write different today. Most everyone is acting like she isn't even there. Its just a weird day I guess.

12/17 -- Today was a very good day except Joe, he quit the play I could have killed him. Jess took his place. If everyone is good we will get to put it on! That would be neat. Wouldn't it. I sure wish the people in here would settle & quiet down. I sure hope you assigned me to the chalk board. Johnson's room had had a dumb idiotic weird yucky play. It was about a massacre card game. It was so short it was pathetic. The boys in Johnson's room are going past the room and yelling in like idots. Some of the boys are really cleaning up. Behind your back some were picking up snow and teasing each other with it. Don't try to stop everything please, some are really normal.

12/18 -- Nell and Becky are goofing off again. We went skating because we cooperated. I hope Morris acts like a human. Lots of the time he acts like a monkey. You can hear people shhhhhhh and it bugs me. Phil acts like a baby most of the time. Jesica is a tattletail (today that is). I am a little of each lots of the time. I can tell girls use the reading Room most of the time. I always notice that smoking sign that Marty made. I think it is really nice & artistic. Nell & Jane are fooling around. They should fool around after school. I can't think of much more to say. I think I am doing O.K. for the beginning or middle or anything you would like to call it in my Journal. I sure wish that some people would SHUT UP. I hope Nell doesn't have to spend time after school tomorrow because she takes guitar with me then.

1/4 -- Everyone is getting sick.
 Pretty soon there
 will be
 no
 school because a majority
 of the people
 are sick.
 I am going to study on Joan of Arc
 because I know nothing about her at
 all, and I see her name
 everywhere. I guess she is
 pretty neat because even
 beans are named
 after her.
 Gee!!
 I suppose I shall work harder.
 I should, I am going
 to study in each
 subject all I
 can. 3
 boys
 went to show some class Marty's
 steam engine, I wonder how they
 reacted & what questions
 they asked the
 three boys.
 Yeah!

2/17 -- Last night I got the flu & still have it now. I just finished reading a book called Rick of High Ridge. It takes place in Alaska. I want to go to school to get a new & good book to read. The boys are building forts (my brothers). This is the first time that I have written in my Journal on a weekend. It seems like I really don't know many people at school. I think next I will read Mrs. Basil's Mixed Up Files. I may have finished my paper in the Journal in a few months. I never am able to write very much.

- 2/22 -- Today everyone was supposed to be perfect even when we were playing clue, pass word you had to be absolutely PERFECT. Even Ann is acting perfect. The day had to come. Maybe I am just mad over the day. I guess I might have been wrong for me to judge people today. I am not going to have a exciting journal today because I don't know what was going on. Today I came to school happy, then it struck me, anger. The table was taken. I got happy again then confused because everything was happening. Ann & I really got together because we both liked talking about God & religion. We both had an urge to talk about it. Now we both missed Mary Kay. That was something to talk about. I still want to but, I don't think I should ask her to talk because if maybe she isn't interested anymore. I'll have her read my Journal. Lisa
- 2/26 -- Today was a good day. I was going to play basketball but there wasn't enough time, so we might play at recess. I think Mr. Prentice and Mike are going to make the room alot better. I tried to explain to my mom, what happened yesterday but I couldn't say much because I didn't know too much. Yesterday when I said Ann was acting perfect. I just wanted her to read it, thats why I wrote it. I really didn't have the nerve to say that I wanted to talk to her about that stuff. Music was better than before. I have more to write than usual, I think. I'm almost through with my Journal. (Note: Mr. Prentice when my Journal is in my file & you have time, Please read it. Lisa P.S. Mike can always read my Journal too. I need help for that film thing & Science Fair. Lisa 20 more sheets left
- 3/5 -- Today was a cruddy day. It didn't seem cruddy for lots of people. But it was for me. It didn't seem like I had any good friends. Ann seems to be talking about the times she and Jessica had. Now she's trying to get her work done. Jessica is mad again. Karen C. came in and yelled JOHN. Lisa
- 3/11 -- Today this whole place is a mess. Most people wouldn't believe It can really look nice. I sometimes feel sorry for Carrie. She has two very beautiful people for parents but her father is away all week. That must be hard on all 3 of you. When I was young I always had my father home, every night. I think she must really love him then. People have been running around lately alot. I am reading a Poem Book today it is called Reflections on A Gift of Watermelon Pickle and other Modern Verses. Lisa
- 3/12 -- Today I got mad. I really don't know why. Everyone seems different I reading a book called Diary of a frustrated Kid Sister it is a neat Book. I don't think I want Mike to read my Journal. I guess it is my choice. I don't really have anything against Mike but I think he is sort of taking over the classroom. I don't really want him to. Now that I got it out I feel much better. Please don't let Mike read it. Lisa

4/27 -- Today was rotten. It started out well but Ann was the first one to get mad and get me mad. Then Jessica during music. She said something in deaf to me. I couldn't understand it. Afterwards I asked what she said. She said "Go to Hell". I'm not riding with her if I can help it. (To Winnipeg). If I get to go. If we get to go. Maybe she was kidding.

5/16 -- [Last entry] Some had cooking today. They made Peanut Butter Cookies. Well this is my last entry. I had fun doing this Journal. Don't really know what to write. Every time you turn around some boys are goofing off. I'm sitting in a desk now. Jane's old one. Jessica likes Gary. Susan likes Bill. Jane likes John. Marcy is going to move to Valley City. Three ring squirt gun circus. Had fun this year. Got a good scare on the test. Found my dollar pen. Won't ever forget this year. The arrangement or the people. Or my teacher. He is a very good teacher. Bobbie wants him for a teacher too. Made Vocational Education Poster of Snoopy. Jessica Gordon is WEIRD. Good Bye Lisa

Marty S. [Marty wrote about 40 pages in his journal. He also included many illustrations.]

12/3 -- I wish we could of stade longer at the rink. I played tag with people. It was a good day for me. I had fun.

12/4 -- it was a fun day but I lost my papers it is not to warm out side I like the day so far

It was a good day but the teacher made me mad it was not very fun to day

12/5 -- it was a bad day it was not fun it was a drage I worked on my math it was a drage to

12/6 -- it was the best day I had it was a good morning it was a good meating it was the best

12/7 -- it was a good day it was fun in gim I went and made 4 points

12/10 -- I had a good day I started to make a hocky game It was fun to saw and it was nice to get the tree to day.

12/12 -- to day I think will be a good day it will be fun I think we will get out of school. I like to work it is fun if not forst I like to have some free time when I can fix on things.

12/13 -- I thing your very dom making us throw all our candy away. we should be able to have candy if we want, it is not your mouth that is getting the cavides! so maby if we want the ach we

can have it! your just jelest that you dont have any thats
all your doing is wasting our mony if it would come out of
your pocket you would not throw it away. it make you feel
real good if you throw away mony wont it your just a BIG
STELERRRRRRR

- 12/14 -- To day was a real good day I had a good time in the gim I
plaed floor hocky. I made 2 points it was fun. but you make
a big puzzle out of work it is hard in the metrick junk. and
why cant we eat candy in the room it is just becaus that ass-
hole is in our room skin flint shes as skiney as a toothpike
- 12/18 -- it was a shiten day today I have to go out side tomorow at
all recesses. prentice is SO DAM SAD I COULD THRO UP.
- 1/2 -- I think you are real sik like you are making us clene our
desks spot les and your justa baby throw a book on the floor!
[Drawing of a book whizzing toward the floor.]
- 1/3 -- it was a good day but the girls were mad becas we were on
steme engins I think it is fasanating you were not as mad
as you were yesterday.
- 1/5 -- to day I tried to make a moter agin I did not have luck it
was a real dom thing to do I did not thing much of it we
finished the court and the teacher read a story
- 1/15 -- To day it was the BEST I made a file place it is cool I did
not like the paint it was a mess
- 1/16 -- I did not tipe becaus you did not let me have the tipe er
righter SO ----
- 1/17 -- it was fun to day I Did not do much I and Dave talked about
steme engins it was fun and we did not make much noise.
- 1/18 -- it was a good day I and Dave drue a steme engen it was fun
and egucational it was a good proget!
- 1/22 -- it was so sad to day it was not so good Dave would not help
me on the steme progec and it was SAD.
- 1/24 -- it was allright to day I made a frezer out of cardbord then
i did my storys they were grate it was neet to freez the
gloves they lookt neet it was fun taking them out man it
was cold.
- 2/4 -- I am doing a car project it will be fun I will sty to work
hard on it
- 2/6 -- I think it is a good room I like it becaus we ant pusht
what I dont like it is amess and we should have a time to
work on anthing but play

- 2/24 -- Man it was sad the sad teach made me stay in my desk and I did not say to Fred that I was going to serve dam shit. I felt like noking his head ooooooff
- 2/25 -- I was sik last week and man do I have work I got most of it done to day I and Jack are making a brige out of straws it will be a lot of fun.
- 2/26 -- it was sad I have to do all my work tomoro it will be hard next week I will work on it little by little each day
- 3/1 -- it was not as hard as I thot I get to go home at 2:15 Man I made a good deal Jack has the same deal it is going to be a cool day I am going down to the shop and work on the gocart I have to put the wheels on the front then the tank. to get a motor that is going to be hard but I will get one then go far! [Drawing of a go-cart zooming across the page.]
- 3/4 -- I and Morris put a skelton to geter we can not think up what it is there are so many bones that we can not find were they go it is complecaded...bones bones bones bones all over. there is a Lever in a bone. but it is in parts I will tell you in parts all over too. it is allmost like a BONE FARM. [Drawing of a bone saying "Dont be a Bone" to an alligator.]
- 3/5 -- I am going out to the rink and man am I going to have fun I made a poster for the reading senter I thing it is sad to right in a jernal. here is my poster [Drawing of poster.]
- 3/13 -- to day was great but thoes sad meetings there like a drage I have my tower done as high as it will go I have to put his armes on him I am going to try to put some ears he looks like a dummey. he fell on the yellow bukit and it didnt even brake it must of been strong. [Drawing of tower hitting the yellow bucket.]
- 3/14 -- we will have a ball it is walts birthday we will have a party it will be fun and I will make it fun we have all the treets and it will be good. [Drawing of birthday cake with "happy days" inscribed.]
- 3/18 -- I went to three interest groups the egg, painting and air plane it was sad at the air plains I made several of them and not a one flue the way I wanted them to they were a flop there was airplanes all over the floor about fifty of them about 10 were in the air for a second.
- 3/19 -- to day I went to crazy righting we were going to do air plans but it was singing. we had fun making crazy storys it was sad. I made a Don't Bug Me box it is cool we take turns being in it I was in it in silent reading I put a switch on it it is inside then I talked to people we had funn then I rote in my jernel it was COOL I HAD A FUN DAY

- 3/28 -- To day I had a radio we are trying to fix it. I and Mick have it all apart the points are the problem they are not making contact
- 4/10 -- to day I did not do much I just had fun with the chickens. I maed a box with light in it. it will keep them warm
- 4/11 -- to day I made a inkyoubater it is cool I get 2 chickens and then I can sell them I weigh my chick the one that wayed the most wighs 77 grams he is a big fat so and they can allmost fly they will folow me when I walk on the floor it will make a good pet
- 5/12 -- to day I put more salt in my salt cristels. I hope the eggs hach before the end of the year I thing they will hach at the last day of school. The little ones I might have to take home I hope I can feed them if they wont eat they will just die.
- 5/14 -- to day I didnt do much but talk I got thruw with my dentle apointment yesterday and man am I glad I will do some of my work too this time I am going to get done befor 17 -- it will be fun haching the morning dove eggs. they are in the inkyoubater.
- 5/16 -- [Last entry] today I did some of my work and most of the day I rote a lot of letters to Angie this was the best school year since the 1st year. I had a lot of fun and did a lot of things that I wanted to do. I got all of my work done this year and I am glad I hope I have a year like this next year but I dont thing I will I had a lot of fun with the motors and making them I hope the eggs hach before the end of the year so all the people that want to see them can see them.

APPENDIX BSelections from Walt's Journal

12/3 Entry -- the First

We started writing our journals today. I'm kind of excited myself. I've been wanting to write things down every day, and now I will have the time to do it. Writing helps me remember, helps me think things out, helps me deal with my feelings. I hope my journal is successful, interesting, full of love, honest, funny sometimes, sad sometimes, and helps me get more out of living.

Today we spent activity time sliding on the ice rink. What a gas! I felt like a kid again -- crazy, free, foolish, showing off. We played tag and we looked so funny sliding and slipping and falling down. It was like the whole game was played in slow motion. You just couldn't move fast. I hope we can get our work done and do it again soon.

I can't remember much about today. Tomorrow I will write things down as they happen, or as I see them, or as I think them. I don't want to miss a minute of tomorrow.

This ends my first entry. WP

12/4 What a Morning!

(10:45) Nothing's going right. Everyone seems restless, unwilling to cooperate. I'm getting mad -- I don't know how to get people to listen. What is the problem? Why did I get off to such a bad start today? Maybe its lack of sleep. Maybe the kids are trying to upset me. Who knows.

I've got to get control. The kids are running wild. No one is listening. I have to say everything 5 times. Still half don't know what's going on. Phil complains about not having time to do his assignments, then wastes time. How do I teach them? How do I make them learn? Math is coming up. How many of them know how to multiply? How can I tell?

Think and act positively! Don't let them get you down. Don't play their hassle game. Get on top. Keep on top. I am serious. I do care. Make them understand -- I have feelings too. That's all for now. WP

(2:45) Still a hassle. I have a headache. Arrow books came in -- that was nice. My books look interesting.

12/5 O.K. Day

We had visitors from Brandon today, hip looking guys, long hair, beards, blue jeans. One fellow, Al, was very interesting to talk to. I am meeting with them tonight to see what they thought of the class. I'm nervous about it. Al said, "There are some tense vibes in there!" I think he picked up on some of the tension between individuals. While they were here we handed back and went over L.A. tests, and wrote some sentences using action words. The kids are really writing good, interesting sentences now. Chuck wrote about me and spiders and

spinning webs; Jess wrote about a man crawling in the desert; Bill wrote about a pauper and Phil wrote about a monster crawling into the room and eating everyone up! Bill drew a picture of that. It's on the board now...

12/6 Law Enforcement Day

Irony. The world turns on irony. Today I laid down the law -- NO VIOLENCE ALLOWED! I promised to enforce this law. No more extortion, intimidation, threats, fear. The class will be better, more relaxed, more fun for everyone of the new law is enforced, & violaters pay the consequences. The kids need my help, my support. I need theirs. People who break the law will not be allowed to continue interacting with the class. They will sit with me outside the inner circle of action. It is only fair.

Dave S. and I had good talk last night. 1st time we really leveled with each other. Talked about fear, fear of letting others see our failures, fear of Steve the Giant. I realized, talking to Debbie & Dave, that I had turned Debbie off to student teaching with me. I thought I was just being honest about the situation she would be facing, but it came out, "I don't want anyone now. I want to do it myself." Very interesting... I was sending out dual messages -- something Mike F. warned me about with the kids. I was ashamed of my inability to control the room. I didn't want people to know that I wasn't as "successful" as Steve DeL. What hang-ups people have. "Openness begins at home (self)", someone should have said. It ain't easy Louella. I think I'll write some more tonight. I'm in a pretty "open" frame of mind...

12/10 Monday Morning Reflections

Talked to Bob King on Sun. Realized that by setting myself up as the authority figure in the room, I opened the way for crummy behavior whenever I was gone. Also my talks to the small groups about physical roughness, and how I would prevent the big boys from knobbing kids, upset the pecking order. The intimidated boys began to feel their oats, with the threat from the big boys removed, and all hell broke loose. I'm learning lots of lessons this year, learning lots about 11-12-year-olds and about myself...

12/11 Journal Talk

I read in the kids' journals last night and they're getting pretty trite. Today I will remind them of some more interesting things to write down.

The morning was loud. It bothers me. The kids are making Xmas decorations for the room. Julie and Arleen worked on L.A. assignment. SSR was a hassle to get started, then went OK. Should I keep doing SSR if the kids don't want it?

12/12 (a.m.) I just finished my lecture on Journal Entries and Progress and Senses. I wonder if they realize how important it is? I wonder if they even heard me? If I can just make them write 15 minutes every day, maybe they'll start to see things, and feel things and observe things and record them. Journals went well the first week or so -- they were new & different. But then the mechanical, trite, care-

less entries started popping up in some, the "I Don't Wanna" syndrome. I have to stop that careless attitude -- for their sake and mine.

(p.m.) Got wrapped up in decorating the room for Xmas. For the most part everyone worked together without bothering each other. The room looks very cheery for a change, & the proverbial Xmas spirit is beginning to manifest itself in attitudes & behavior.

Jane and Chuck worked very hard cleaning up the room. They deserve special recognition. Becky, Nell & Jane stayed after school & we all had a nice chat. They worked on decorating the window.

The weather is blowing & snowing and -30° F. Wonder if Bob will make it tomorrow?

Xmas tree is in the center of the room now, where it belongs. It's bare, just green and brown and healthy-looking. I think Xmas trees are most beautiful before the decorations go on, like a young girl, flush & excited and smiling, before she puts on her sequined gown and amke-up and goes to the grand ball. She is herself, and expectant. And so the tree.

Gary said he liked the story I wrote for him. That made me feel good. I wish I had the time to write him a story every night.

I feel very good now, sort of contented. It must have been a good day.

12/13 (a.m.) The tide of enthusiasm (horse-play?) cannot be denied. Bob isn't coming. Weather? Gary said he might collaborate on a book. I think we could write a good one. He can keep me honest, tell me when I'm being dumb, and supply me with the proper vocabulary and subject matter.

My impassioned speech about journal entries, about getting in touch with your guts, fell on a lot of deaf ears, but some listened. The girls looked mostly hurt for some reason. I think I came down a little hard, a little unfairly, on them. Some of the kids do write about what is most important. I don't think they are as obsessed with "understanding feelings" as I am. Is it unfair for me to expect this subjective, introspective soul-searching from them?

Right now observations:

Jess and Benny on floor singing Xmas songs and coloring a Xmas tree I drew for them.

Lisa patching her globe.

Mick and Gary putting up green paper.

12/14 Going Home Day

Very quiet and settled this morning -- games, conversation, actors rehearsing. When I went over the metric system and the decimal point people were polite and listened. Mick really got into metric measuring and even bought a meter stick from me. The girls are all wound up about something, cheerleading I think, and that old green-eyed monster & that old all-American competition is causing them problems. But they'll work it out. I got a touch of flu but feel OK now. Right now the boys are playing "Dealer's Choice", Benny and Bill are working on sets for the play, Marty & Phil fixing the typewriter... Chuck beat me at checkers again, after I had him down... Jessica has sat quietly in her desk most of the day. Some of the boys (Jess and

Bill) have taken swipes with the broom. Some seem more concerned with the room's appearance since we fixed it up. All the decorations are STILL UP!!!

The cat visited us today. Rumor has it his ears were frost-bitten. They did look kind of droopy.

Gary and I talked about the story we wrote. He had me make one correction -- I used "freeze" instead of "froze". He wanted it grammatically correct. I hope our collaboration continues.

Phil is the only one not writing in his journal, at least ostensibly.

12/17 Monday Blues

Today was havoc. I had no energy. Kids wasted time all day. Most were bored. Bill was particularly restless -- and a pain in the ass! The girls were make-up crazy. Benny and Bill did work on props for the play. The players rehearsed this afternoon. Babe came this a.m. but didn't stick around. She appeared bewildered at the chaos in the room. I had nothing planned for today. Tomorrow will be different. Can't hack another day like today. Phil wrote a good reply to a letter to Santa (from a 2nd-grader). Right now Gary is sweeping the floors (unsolicited), some are writing in journals, Bill is just sitting & mouthing off. Gary is working pretty hard. WHY?

All Bill got from me today was negative feedback -- because most of his behavior was negative and because I didn't have the energy to dig out the positive. Now Gary is straightening up the conference table. What's the idea? Phil is sweeping now. I think everyone is worn out and/or bored.

Maybe some good things happened today. I hope so.

Tomorrow I am going to keep a list of good things that are happening. Focus on the positive.

Gary is writing in his journal now.

Bill & Jess have gravitated to the back with Gary, John, Mick and Dave. Feeling their oats?

12/18 Happy Tuesday

What a beautiful day in the classroom so far! I started off a little gruff & firm, saying that yesterday made me nervous and I didn't want chaos, noise and goofing off to be the dis-order of the day. I forced & hassled the kids to try writing a Xmas Past or Xmas Future story. Most wrote a few mechanical lines -- Jane, Dave, Eileen, Chuck, Mick & Becky put some effort into it, with good results. (Half the class was out practicing the play.) After the writing exercise we just talked and people were generally quiet & busy & respectful. After recess I made up a metric ditto while everyone played games (quietly) then the whole class erupted into busy measuring of objects, and each other, in the room. I was pleased with the excitement & enthusiasm they displayed. Many are getting into metric measurement. Still lots of work needed on decimals & place value.

Morris moved into the room today. No problems. He does wander around a lot.

SSR went well (25 min.). Right now people are keeping busy with games, reading, etc. Bill wrote 2 full pages in journal already

today, "because I felt like it."

Phil is going around the room tightening screws.

I was in a good mood after music so we all went out & ice skated. It was fun, but cold, & I was a little shakey...

Right now (3 p.m.) it is quiet. Most are writing in journals. It was a minor hassle to get them to but it is Xmas week & it is the end of the day. A very good day.

A recurring problem: Jane, Becky & Nell goofing off in the hall & bathroom. It's a silly game and I want to stop it.

I think I'll read journals tonight.

Benny is engrossed in drawing a skating rink with tiny skaters. Phil is writing in journal! So is Gary. Jess is sweeping.

12/19 I just broke up a fight between Becky and Mick.

Lisa & Ann are really eager learners. Wish I could quit being a policeman and spend more time talking with them & learning with them.

(Later) Hostile feelings among girls about my grabbing Becky. They think Mick was to blame & I shouldn't have grabbed Becky too. They do not understand that I didn't know who was to blame & didn't even care. I stopped the fight, period. All they can see is an injustice -- they know it was Mick's fault -- therefore I should have known, even though I didn't see how it started. A real semantic, perceptual problem...

12/20 (9:25 a.m.) The kids are practicing the play. Row 2 is talking; Bill is still writing in his journal -- amazing how much & how well he's written lately. Phil keeps complaining about the lights -- he doesn't like it bright in here; Marty is sitting on sill kicking his desk.

FLASH! Internal dissent in the play! Sandy is absent. Apparently she was the cement -- without her no one wants to be serious. It may be a good example of the need, sometimes, for a take-charge guy.

It's hard for me to think now.

(11:00 a.m.) Record player is playing. Bill is in library writing a long story; Gary, Dave are goofing in the halls; Ann & Lisa putting their poetry book together. Marty and Benny with tape recorder; June doing math; Phil is under his coat listening to radio.

(2:35 p.m.) Journal time. It's been a chaotic day, but not too bad. In the future, more structured blocks of time, to act as a refuge (for me) & a change of pace for them.

The Xmas tree looks much happier with presents under it: red, gold, green, big, tiny, tempting, mysterious, wonderful, exciting --

Tonight I will be busy making Xmas presents for everyone. I'll try to take Becky's to hospital for her. Tomorrow is Xmas party -- open presents, eat ice cream, cup cakes, whatever -- after the play. Hope the play goes all right.

Everyone, less Phil, Benny, Marty, is writing quietly in journal.

1/3/74 A completely structured day -- I managed to stay on top most of the time -- it never got out of control (except maybe at Phil's birthday party -- the kids go crazy at parties...).

I lectured a lot -- tried for a sane, polite discussion with modicum of success. Got into rather heated, and exciting, debate with Jane et al on science -- boredom -- girls' stereotyped roles -- open minds -- making real choices about our lives.

Marty, Lisa, Bill very interested in steam engine & science. Girls want some girl-type activities; e.g., sewing, fashion. I encouraged them to pursue that.

My energy level for the day was up.

1/4 Lousy day. Hassled kids all day -- about interrupting, fighting, being polite and considerate. What a frustrating feeling -- interest is low; restlessness is high; everyone wants to be doing whatever they're not; no one listens to what I have to say. I have to shout to get their attention -- which lasts 30 seconds at most; I'm tired, of reminding people to be quiet. Sullen Jane gets on my nerves too. What a sour puss. Never wants to do anything except gab and goof in halls. She's turned off to so much, and gripes a lot. It makes me tired just thinking about and watching her.

Boy, am I tired.

SSR went well -- 'bout all that did. The new books are starting to circulate. They have some good stuff in them.

Oh yeah. Saroyan's story about school went over big. Kids thought it funny, especially the running & chasing about. Really action-oriented kids.

Too much talking, not enough doing, in here. But doing is so loud, so conflict-ridden, so destructive, such a physical hassle. If kids could do things without being disruptive, destructive, & without feeling the need to be center of attention, it might work. I still haven't been able to define my role in this process -- where do I stand during the fray?

Stress is heavy. I've been confused today -- about my "goals", about "failing the kids", about what's important. These doubts come and go like gas pains -- to be rid of them would be a relief.

1/10 What a great day! Spent a.m. in Dave S.'s room - very comfortable. The kids have a sense about doing their work -- part fear? part interest -- but seems healthy. They seemed a little shy toward me -- little too deferential -- but were basically friendly...My kids had a good a.m. too -- all reports favorable. They seemed glad to see me -- they booed and hissed in a friendly way...

1/14 What a beautiful morning. I explained the L.A. assignments -- new system. I really think it will work now. Everyone (less Jane & Co.) wrote a story this a.m. -- excellent, real enthusiasm. Gary continues to write deep, personal, humorous stories, action-packed. I think our book will be good. There was a free period & a conscious effort to be quiet & not mess it up. Morris & Kenny listened to a taped story the a.m. & then counted the books in library & money in FLUB jar...

1/16 Best a.m. yet. After rocky beginning everyone settled down and worked or played quietly! Just amazing. Gary especially worked hard. We had a reading conference & he reads very well -- just misses

a lot of small easy words.

Carol O. is visiting. Wonder what she thinks?

I feel great. After I get math & social studies going I'll feel better. It's starting to roll -- I'm excited. I think it will end up being a good year for everyone. I'm high. I hope again!

Everyone is writing silently -- great! great! Mary, Lana & Jessica are working diligently on their pantomime. All's right with the world! Amen!

1/24 I've been grouchy since recess -- not sure what's bothering me -- it's been noisy...

It's very quiet now. I'll continue my search for what's bothering me -- expectations too high this week after a good week last week? -- did I believe all those good things I wrote on report cards? -- frustration at not being able to explain fractions clearly? (Jane got upset & almost started crying) -- a fear that it's all going to fall apart again before the cement is even set? -- Maybe it's a change in the weather -- or the end-of-the-week frayed nerves syndrome.

I like using dice better than flash cards in mult. group. Teaches associativity. (?)

Thoughts last night: Conflict between education & humanness. How teaching "skills" interferes with real interaction with kids -- how the pressure to "get work done" interferes, influences my treatment of kids, influences my responses -- how teachers have trouble relating to children as children, as people, as survivors, as needers, as frail animals. I say things to kids I think are harmful, & which I wouldn't say if I weren't "concerned" about their "education", about how they will do next year...

Tonight I will spend hours here at school -- working, smoking, drinking cokes, wondering what I can do better, not thinking about Cheryl and Carrie. I feel now that the effort is worthwhile -- but is it? How long will I be able to continue in this endeavor?

2/5 Dave S. visited this a.m. and was "impressed". Said it wasn't nearly as bad as rumor had lead him to expect. My reaction was -- it was for me -- I am tuned in to so much more, that I see & hear things that others miss -- or that I only imagine exist.

ANTICIPATION -- really plays an important role in perception.

RESPONSIBILITY -- really creates pressure for the teacher in a classroom. Dave was comfortable in my room largely (I propose) because he wasn't responsible for what did or did not happen in here. I felt the same way in his classroom. So it goes...

2/11 I have felt very comfortable in here today. The kids aren't doing much "work" but they are being less noisy and destructive in their play. The small groups are working very well -- I think there's a real interest in what we've been doing -- and I can deal much more effectively with 6 than with 28 kids.

Marty did a huge papier mache eyeball & hung it from the lights. it is bloodshot & staring at me. Lisa & Sandy want to learn all about Ancient Egypt & the pyramids...

3/27 Today was wild -- the girls got into a black magic/devil/exorcist discussion & June really got scared. (Jane said that she saw the Devil right in front of Ann's face.) They want to continue the discussion group. I'm a little leery of it.

They candled an egg and saw something growing in there -- great excitement.

The airplane contest was very popular. Bill won with a foreign entry (Brad L., from the other room, was purported to have been the designer/engineer).

I didn't do my creative writing workshop -- didn't feel like pushing it -- the afternoon has been quiet & relaxing -- lots of MAD readers; full use of boxes made (very popular, especially the "Don't Bug Me because it's green and fancy")...

4/4 Got up at 4:30 a.m. to catch train. It was late so I walked back home and took a bath...Ended up driving the car back anyway. Half day in before the day even starts...

Gary and Jane are sitting together on couch. Mick with Aggie; Becky with Morris.

Benny is feeling down -- Mick has rejected him again.

Eileen & Carol & June have done tons of busy work this week.

June really wishes we sat in rows, were made to be quiet, had textbooks, did worksheets, questions boxes. She has no desire to ever make a decision on her own. She is a sheep, a hard-working sheep. She will be valedictorian of her high school graduating class, & then become a school teacher just like her mother.

Some of the kids flinch when I look at them during silent reading, when they're not being silent. Do I feel good about being feared? (No) Do I want respect (obedience?) at any cost? (No) Re-read Larry's paper the other night -- I have come to do a lot of things to kids I don't feel good about, just because they work. (Long-range growth suffers at expense of short-range management -- this area really needs to be explored, at least by me. The immediacy of discipline (pos. & neg.) & its long range effect).

(1:20 p.m.) The day is falling apart. Loose socializing may be a worthwhile thing to do but it fosters a crappy attitude toward behavior in the room. Each individual becomes the center of the universe, the mover of planets, the glorious sun. All others, the outsiders, are satellites, insignificant specks of solar dust, inconsequential plasm. Oh, well, maybe I should just declare myself a Star F***er like Gregory Corso says. Or maybe feed & grain is my line -- or something mechanical, cold hard steel with threads, precision parts.

Chuck is engrossed in Tom Swift;

Bill & Kenny are mixing chemicals;

Lana & Mary are sitting in a chair apart from rest of class, dreary-eyed, frauzy;

Sandy makes me sick sometimes.

Need a class meeting at 2:30. Talk About:

1. Young Love as a Disruptive Force
2. Imposing a Spartan Regime -- Closing Down an Open Classroom, or Out to Lunch.

It's like old times in here. Tomorrow will be different. (That old sickness is in my stomach.) I'm sitting by the door now, the gate-keeper, the prison guard -- it's my own prison too.

So many of these kids just CAN'T work without an authority standing over them. I left my authority in the bathtub at 4:30 this morning...

There's a party at Becky's Saturday night -- a boy/girl party. That's charged the atmosphere in here -- who's going with whom? What are we going to do? 1st party for most of them? Yeah! I remember my 1st "party" (with girls & sex on my mind). I was in the 4th grade -- it was in Pete and Penny's basement. Aunt Phyllis got us cute little kids playing spin the bottle. I was the youngest on there -- ended up doing Bronx cheers on Becky Blake's cheek & thinking myself quite the man! In 6th & 7th grades it was much more serious & long-winded kissing -- mostly with Phyllis McB. (Bill W. had to kiss Sandy H). I remember Sandy's basement (all my early sex took place in dehumidified basements) -- pooltable, wicker chairs with cushions that kept sliding to the floor in the middle of our awkward groping. Sandy's basement...little bowls of candy, to entice me (she always was hot for me -- I just played along with her because she had a pooltable & those little bowls of enticement. What a treat, to go over and be fed & served a coke in those big glass tumblers filled with ice. Oh yeah, big-screen TV. Glad Bill W. was around to kiss her & do the dirty work.)...

Back to 1974. Recess. Everyone out but me, Phil & Lana. The silence fits well into this messy room.

4/18 ...General reflections: the room has been a busy place this week -- lots of activity, some of it productive, some of it otherwise. (The term "productive" is so value-laden I hate to use it.) Sandy spent most of her time out of the room helping Marian; Ann, Lisa & Jessica have been working on a Dr. Seuss play -- they are tremendous; Eileen & Bonnie are best friends & Eileen seems much happier -- reflected in her journal entries; Mary took a poll today and found out that everyone liked her better before Lana came -- food for thought, Mary. Mary has read 3 books this week in Lana's absence & has been pleasant; Benny still measures his good & bad days by how Mick treats him -- his 2 long hits in baseball were big events for him; Susan has been acting tough; Morris has been moody; Kenny about the same -- he does good work now & then; Marty busy with chicks -- he built an ingenious feeder today; Bill is back to being bored & restless; Chuck and Phil bicker all day -- it keeps them going...Becky & Nell continue in their little girl social whirl; Dave mouthy as ever, will change when all the oxygen on planet earth is used up...Myself -- I've been mostly comfortable this week -- not too well prepared but seemingly able to handle whatever arises in some satisfactory way. Today I worked a lot with individuals without letting the rest of the class distract me. Made some good contact -- clicked. Spring weather has eased my tension. I smile more.

Some of the journal questionnaires are excellent. I told the kids that they were important to me & they seem to be responding.

APPENDIX C

Name _____

JOURNAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Date _____

Directions: Read back over your journal entries for the entire year. Read carefully and think about what you have written. Then answer the questions the best you can. Use the space provided on this form; if you need more space, use the back of this questionnaire or a separate sheet of paper.

1. What are some things you have written about in your journal?
(Try to list at least ten things.)

2. Are your journal entries long or short? _____ Why are some of them longer than others? What did you write about in your longer entries?

3. Can you find a "good" day or a "bad" day in your journal? _____
What is the difference? (What makes a good day or a bad day?)

4. How has your journal CHANGED since the first of the year? (For example, kinds of things you have written about, writing style, etc.)

5. What are some things that have NOT CHANGED in your journal?

6. Tell about your most INTERESTING entry. Why is it the most interesting?

Name _____ JOURNAL QUESTIONNAIRE (cont'd)

7. Did you read other people's journals? ____ Why? _____

What did you learn about those people by reading in their journals?

8. Looking back over your journal, what can you learn about yourself?

9. By looking at what you have written in your journal, what seems to be most important or most interesting to you?

10. How have YOU changed since the first of the year? (Use your journal as a starting place to answer this question.)

11. What was most FUN about keeping a journal? What was LEAST fun?

12. Would you like to keep a journal next year, even if your teacher does not require it? ____ WHY?

13. Use the rest of this page to write down your own feelings about your journal, how it has helped you, how you have used it, how it shows your own growth, etc.